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For the last two years, I have helped implement the Crop Cash and Crop Cash PLUS programs at our local farmers market. I have witnessed first hand how impactful these programs are and I have also seen them grow exponentially. Crop Cash & Crop Cash PLUS help individuals and families meet their food needs while simultaneously supporting our local producers and strengthening our states' agricultural economy.

THANK YOU.

Please support \$478,500 in base funding for NOFA Vermont's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs, to strengthen farm viability and address food security.

DATA:

2022: 155 individual transactions resulting in \$4,289 which was 6% of total sales reported by vendors. (\$2,169 EBT benefits + \$2,120 in Crop Cash)

2023: 303 individual transactions resulting in \$15,132 which was 16% of total sales reported by vendors. (\$7,154 EBT benefits + \$8,208 in Crop Cash and PLUS)

TESTIMONY: "CROP Cash Is A Lifesaver For Us" (shared with permission)

As two senior citizens struggling to make ends meet on a very low fixed income due to age and disabilities, we were very relieved to have been found eligible for the SNAP/3 Squares program. However, as grocery prices climbed ever higher (during the COVID emergency and beyond) we worried that it was getting harder and harder to afford the healthier foods which we had relied upon being able to access to help us with the lifestyle and dietary changes we knew were helping us remain as healthy as possible.

Fortunately, there is a local food pantry, The Hardwick Area Food Pantry, which offered us a means to obtain high quality fresh produce while we were in an emergency, but we did not want to take food from what for many of our neighbors might be an emergency rations provider. That consideration caused us to use that service sparingly (even as occasional volunteers).

Imagine our delight to learn of the CROP Cash Program!!

By doubling (and sometimes even tripling) our EBT card's buying power we are able to go to our local farmers market, The Hardwick Farmers Market, and with our EBT benefit, purchase fresh, very high quality, usually organically grown, local produce -- from our neighbors and friends -- in enough quantity that we can even put some of it by to see us through the winter!

We are confident in saying it has saved Alan's life -- as a formerly morbidly obese Type II diabetic with high blood pressure, and now 200 lbs lighter survivor of colon cancer. Though he still has neurological disability, which cannot be reversed, he no longer needs the diabetes and blood pressure medicines which were once prescribed to him. And, at all his recent visits his doctors say, "Whatever you're doing, keep doing it! It's working!"

Please feel free to share our experience with others in any way which might help keep this wonderful program going. (It would be great to see it available at farm stands, for CSAs, etc., if it isn't already.)

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